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*Seven Ages
of Man*



Ralph Bergengren



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THE SEVEN AGES OF MAN

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The
SEVEN AGES *of* MAN

BY
RALPH BERGENGREN



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I

BABY, BABY

In meeting a baby, one should behave as much as possible like a baby one's self. We cannot, of course, diminish our size, or exchange our customary garments for baby-clothes; neither can we arrive in a perambulator, and be conveyed in the arms, either of a parent or a nursemaid, into the presence of the baby whom we are to meet. The best we can do is to hang, as it were on the hatrack, our preconceived ideas of what manner of behavior entertains a baby, as cooing, grimacing, tickling, and the like, and model our deportment on the dignified but friendly reticence that one baby evinces in meeting another.

— BABY: HIS FRIENDS AND FOES.

OF the many questions that Mr. Boswell, at one time and another, asked his

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friend, Dr. Johnson, I can hardly recall another more searching than one that he himself describes as whimsical.

“I know not how so whimsical a thought came into my head,” says Boswell, “but I asked, ‘If, sir, you were shut up in a castle, and a new-born child with you, what would you do?’”

“JOHNSON: Why, sir, I should not much like my company.

“BOSWELL: But would you take the trouble of rearing it?

“He seemed, as may be supposed, unwilling to pursue the subject: but, upon my persevering in my question, replied, ‘Why, yes, sir, I would; but I must have all conveniences. If I had no garden, I would make a shed on the roof, and take it there for fresh air. I should feed it, and wash it much, and with warm water, to please it, not with cold water, to give it pain.’”

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“BOSWELL: But, sir, does not heat relax?

“JOHNSON: Sir, you are not to imagine the water is to be very hot. I would not *coddle* the child.”

It appears, too, that the Doctor had given some thought to the subject, although never expecting to be a mother himself: his immediate insistence upon fresh air promises well for the infant, and the frequency with which he proposes to wash his little companion indicates that, so long as the water-supply of the castle lasted, he would have done his part. A cow in the castle seems to have been taken for granted; but, in 1769, even Dr. Johnson would have known little or nothing about formulas, nor would it have occurred to him to make a pasteurizing apparatus, as so many parents do nowadays, out of a large tin pail and a pie-plate. Here the

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baby would have had to take his eighteenth-century chance. And I wish, too, that he might have had a copy of "The Baby's Physical Culture Guide," that modern compendium of twenty-four exercises, by which a reasonably strong-armed mother may strengthen and develop the infant's tiny muscles; for I like to think of Dr. Johnson exercising his innocent companion in his shed on the roof. "Sir," he says, "I do not much like my employment; but here we are, and we'll have to make the best of it."

Such an experience, no doubt, would have been good for Dr. Johnson, and good for the baby (if it survived). "That into which his little mind is to develop," says "The Baby's Physical Culture Guide," "is plastic — like a wax record, ready to retain such impressions as are made upon it"; and on this wax some,

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at least, of the impressions left by Dr. Johnson must have been valuable. But on the real mystery of babyhood — the insoluble enigma that the “Guide” can only in small measure dispose of by comparing the rearing of an infant with the home-manufacture of a record for the gramophone — the experience would have thrown no light.

The Doctor, I dare say, would have written a paper on the feeding and washing of infants, and later dictionaries of familiar quotation might perhaps have been enriched by the phrase, “‘The baby is grandfather to the man.’ — JOHNSON.” But of this grandfather the man has no memory. His babyhood is a past concerning which he is perforce silent, a time when it is only by the report of others that he knows he was living. His little mind seems to have been more than a little blank; and although gifted

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novelists have set themselves the imaginative task of thinking and writing like babies, none, in my reading, has ever plausibly succeeded. The best they can do is to think and write like little adults. I recall, for example, the honest effort of Miss May Sinclair, whom I greatly respect as an adult, to see Mr. Olivier through the eyes of his baby daughter Mary. "Papa sat up, broad and tall above the table, all by himself. He was dressed in black. One long brown beard hung down in front of him and one short beard covered his mouth. You knew he was smiling because his cheeks swelled high up in his face, so that his eyes were squeezed into narrow, shining slits. When they came out again, you saw scarlet specks and smears in their corners." A fearsome Papa! — and, although I have no way of knowing that fathers do not present themselves

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in this futurist aspect to their helpless offspring, I am glad to think otherwise. At all events a baby is, and must be, well used to living in Brobdingnag.

It would be a surprising thing, if it were not so common, that a man shows so little curiosity about this forgotten period of his life. But such curiosity would be impossible to satisfy. Existing photographs of him at that time are a disappointment: he seldom admits seeing any resemblance, and, if he does, the likeness rarely, if ever, gives him any visible satisfaction. Nor can anything of real and personal interest be found out by interviewing those who then knew him. Of a hundred, nay, of a thousand or a million babies, — and though I cannot speak as a woman, it seems to me (except, perhaps, for a livelier interest and pleasure among them in their infant appearance) that everything

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I am saying applies equally to babies of that fascinating sex, — the trivial details observed by those who are nearest them are practically identical. They thump their heads. They chew their fingers. They try to feed their toes; and, sillier yet, they try to feed them with things that are obviously inedible. And so forth. And so forth. If Dr. Johnson, actually shut up in a castle, and a newborn child with him, had kept a record, the result would have been very much like the records that mothers now keep in what, unless I am mistaken, are called "Baby Books." If you've seen one Baby Book, as the cynical old man said about circuses, you've seen all of 'em.

Nor does any man take pleasure in preserving and reading over his own Baby Book. Hercules, to be sure, might have been interested to read in his mother's handwriting, —

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"Tuesday. An eventful day. Two big, horrid Snakes came in from the garden, and got in Darling's cradle, frightening Nurse into hysterics; but Darling only cooed and strangled them both with his dear, strong little hands. He gets stronger and cunninger every day. When the horrid Snakes were taken away from him, he cried and said, 'Atta! Atta!'"

But Hercules was an exceptionally interesting baby; and the average Baby Book records nothing that a grown man can regard with pride, and much, if he has any sensitiveness at all, that must make him blush. Nothing but respect for his mother, it is almost safe to say, would withhold him from hurrying the incriminating document to the cellar, and cremating it in the furnace.

For in the beginning Captain William Kidd, George Washington, Dr. Johnson,

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the writer of this essay, and even the editor of the "Atlantic Monthly," looked and behaved very much alike. And so, for that matter, did little Moll Cutpurse and little Susan B. Anthony. So far as anybody could then have said, Captain Kidd might have become a thoughtful, law-abiding essayist, and I a pirate, handicapped, indeed, by changed conditions of maritime traffic, but unconscientiously doing my wicked best.

As the twig is bent, says the proverb, so is the tree inclined; but these little twigs are bent already, and I humbly submit, with all respect to my scientific friends, and their white mice and their guinea pigs, that where and how it happened remains an insoluble mystery. Little as I know about myself, I know that I am neither a white mouse nor a guinea pig. And this, mark you, is no mere conceit. Scientists themselves

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have decided that when babies, in that remote past when they first began really to interest their parents, and the human mother, the most pathetic figure of that primitive world, first began the personal and affectionate observation that was to develop slowly, over millions of years, until it found expression in the first Baby Book — scientists, themselves, I say, have decided that, then and there, you and I, intelligent reader, began to differ essentially from every other known kind of mammal. There appeared — oh, wonder! — something psychical as well as physical about us; but *where it came from*, they cannot tell us. “Natural selection,” so John Fiske once summed up this opinion, “began to follow a new path and make psychical changes instead of physical changes.” Little enough there seems to have been to start with; little enough, indeed, there seems to be

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now — yet enough more to encourage us to believe that Baby is a lot further along in the right direction than he was a good many million years ago. And with this helpful conviction, Baby himself, whether he will grow up to write essays or commit picturesque murder, seems reasonably well satisfied. We solemn adults, standing around the crib, may well admire, not so much the pinkness and chubbiness of his toes, as the pinkness and chubbiness (if I may so express it) of his simple satisfaction with the mere fact of existence, his simple faith in the Universe. And when we think how impossible it is to think of its beginning, we, too, may capture something of this infantile optimism.

It is by no means impossible (though not susceptible of scientific proof) that Baby may have a life of his own; and, if we may assume Hercules weeping

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and saying, "Atta! Atta!" — because shrewd observers of babyhood declare it to be characteristic of babies to say, "Atta! Atta!" when something desirable, in this case two dead snakes, is removed from their range of vision, — may we not assume also a universal language of babies, and a place, such as it may be, from which they have emigrated? Here, indeed, one follows M. Maeterlinck, except that, in his judgment, unborn babies speak French. Such a theory is no help to the novelist, for in that case baby Mary Olivier's impressions of Mr. Olivier must be rendered in baby — a language equally unknown to Miss Sinclair and to her readers. Babies have been heard to say, for example, "Nja njan dada atta mama papaï attaï na-na-na hatta meenë-meenë-meenë mömm mömma ao-u" — and who but another baby knows

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whether this may not be speech? The assumption that this is an effort to speak the language of the baby's elders is academic, as, for that matter, is the assumption that they are his elders. There may even be no baby at all; for, as Schopenhauer has almost brusquely put it. "The uneasiness that keeps the never-resting clock of metaphysics in motion, is the consciousness that the non-existence of this world is just as possible as its existence." But this, I confess, is far too deep for me.

Baby, baby in your cot,
Are you there? — or are you not?
If you're not, then what of me!
Baby, *what* and *where* are we?

For all practical purposes, however, Baby is sufficiently real — substantial enough, indeed, as "The Baby's Physical Culture Guide" shows in Exercise 24, to be lifted by his little feet and stood on his little head; but, mercifully

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adds the "Guide," "do not hold Baby on his head very long." For all practical purposes we must, and do, assume our own existence. "Here we are," as I have imagined Dr. Johnson saying to his innocent new-born comrade, "and we'll have to make the best of it." Nobody has thought of a better way, or any other way at all, for us to get here; and the familiar Biblical phrase, 'born again,' may perhaps be more literal than we are wont to imagine, and apply to this world as well as the next. Baby himself may just have been born again. That innocent-seeming and rather silly-sounding monologue, which we flatter ourselves is an earnest attempt to imitate our own speech, — "Nja njan dada atta mama papaï attai na-na-na hatta meeně-meeně-meeně mōmm mōmma ao-u," — may it not be the soliloquy of a gentle philosopher, or, again, the confes-

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sion of an out-and-out rascal, talking to himself of his misdeeds, chuckling and cooing over them, indeed, before he forgets them in this new state of being? May not Papa, waggishly shaking his forefinger and saying, "You little rascal, you," be speaking with a truthfulness which, if known, would make him sick?

Meanwhile, as says "The Baby's Physical Culture Guide," "Don't jerk Baby round. Never rush through his exercises, but talk to him in a happy, encouraging way. When he is able to talk he will be glad to tell you what great, good fun he has been having."

So speaks, I think, a mother's imagination; in sober reality, even the great good fun of Exercise 24 will be forgotten. Which is perhaps why, although I have heard men wish they could again be children, I have never heard any man say he would like to be a baby.

II

TO BE A BOY

I love dearly to watch the boys at their play. How gayly they pitch and catch their baseball with their strong little hands! How blithely they run from base to base! How merrily their voices come to me across the green; for, although I cannot hear what they say, I know it expresses a young, innocent joy in this big, good world. Yet even in this Garden there is a Serpent, and one day two of the little innocents quarreled and came to blows. A real fight! I soon hurried out and stopped that, but the sight of their little faces distorted with rage, and one poor boy bleeding at the nose, upset me for quite a time.
— AN OLD MAID'S WINDOW.

IN "The Boyhood of Great Men,"
published by Harper and Brothers, in

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1853, but now, I fear, very little read, it is told of Sir Isaac Newton that "An accident first fired him to strive for distinction in the school-room. The boy who was immediately above him in the class, after treating him with a tyranny hard to bear, was cruel enough to kick him in the stomach, with a severity that caused great pain. Newton resolved to have his revenge, but of such a kind as was natural to his reasoning mind, even at that immature age. He determined to excel his oppressor in their studies and lessons; and, setting himself to the task with zeal and diligence, he never halted in his course till he had found his way to the top of the class; thus exhibiting and leaving a noble example to others of his years similarly situated. Doubtless, after this, he would heartily forgive his crestfallen persecutor, who could not but henceforth feel ashamed

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of his unmanly conduct, while Newton would feel the proud consciousness of having done his duty after the bravest and noblest fashion which it is in the power of man to adopt."

We cannot all be Sir Isaac Newtons, and, although I may wish for a passing moment that some sturdy little school-fellow had kicked me too in the stomach, the resulting sequence of events would probably have been different, and the world would have gained little or nothing by my natural indignation. Having an impartial mind, I should like to know also *why* Sir Isaac was kicked in the stomach, and what became afterward of the boy who kicked him. As his fame grew in the world, the reflected glory of having thus kicked Sir Isaac Newton in the stomach would presumably have brightened in proportion, but, lacking other distinction, the kicker served his

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evolutionary purpose and has now vanished.

But this much remains of him — that his little foot kicks also in the stomach the widely accepted fallacy that boyhood is an age of unalloyed gold, to which every man now and then looks back and vainly yearns to be a boy again. “Oh! happy years!” — so sighed the poet Byron, — “once more, who would not be a boy?” And so to-day, as one may at least deduce from his general newspaper reading, sigh all the editors of all the newspapers in the United States. Not, indeed, for a boyhood like Sir Isaac Newton’s, but for the standard American boyhood, to which, in theory, every ageing American looks back with tender reminiscence — that happy time when he went barefooted, played “hookey” from school, fished in the running brook with a bent pin for a hook, and

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swam, with other future bankers, merchants, clerks, clergymen, physicians and surgeons, confidence-men, pickpockets, authors, actors, burglars, etc., etc., in an old swimming-hole. The democracy of the old swimming-hole is, in fact, the democracy of the United States, naked and unashamed; and even in the midst of a wave of crime (one might almost imagine), if the victim should say suddenly to the hold-up man, —

“Oh, do you remember the ole swimmin’ hole,
And the hours we spent there together;
Where the oak and the chestnut o’ershadowed the
bowl,
And tempered the hot summer weather?

Ah, sweet were those hours together we spent
In innocent laughter and joy!
How little we knew at the time what it meant
To be just a boy — just a boy!”

— the hold-up man would drop his automatic gun, and the two would dissolve on each other’s necks in a flood of sympathetic tears.

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It is a pleasant and harmless fallacy, and I for one would not destroy it; I am no such stickler for exactitude that I would take away from any man whatever pleasure he may derive from thinking that he was once a barefoot boy, even if circumstances were against him and his mother as adamant in her refusal to let him go barefooted. But the fallacy is indestructible: the symbols may not have been universal, but it is true enough of boyhood that time then seems to be without limit; and this comfortable, unthinking sense of immortality is what men have lost and would fain recover. One forgets how cruelly slow moved the hands of the schoolroom clock through the last, long, lingering, eternal fifteen minutes of the daily life-sentence. One forgets how feverishly the seconds chased each other, faster than human feet could follow, when one's little

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self was late for school, and the clamor of the distant bell ended in a solemn, ominous silence. Then was the opportunity for stout heart to play "hookey," and to lure the finny tribe with a poor worm impaled on a bent pin; and that, in the opinion of all the editors of all the newspapers in the United States, is what all of us always did. But in the painful reality most of us, I think, tried to overtake those feverish seconds, seeking indeed to outrun time, and somehow or other, though the bell had stopped ringing, get unostentatiously into our little seats before it stopped. And so we ran, and ran, and ran, lifting one leaden foot after the other with hopeless determination, in a silent, nightmare world where the road was made of glue and the very trees along the way turned their leaves to watch us drag slowly by. Little respect we would have had then for the

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poet Byron and his "Ah! happy years! once more, who would not be a boy?"

But even when time seemed to stand still, or go too fast, we had no consciousness that the complicated clock of our individual existence could ever run down and stop; and so happily careless were we of this treasure, that we often wished to be men! "When I was young," says the author of "The Boy's Week-Day Book," — another volume that is not read nowadays as much as it used to be, —

I doubted not the time would come,
When grown to man's estate,
That I would be a noble 'squire,
And live among the great.

It was a proud, aspiring thought,
That should have been exiled: —
I wish I was more humble now
Than when I was a child.

I wonder what proud, aspiring thought Uncle Jones, as he called himself, just then had in mind; but it was evidently

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no wish to be a boy again: perhaps he meditated matrimony.

For my own part I cannot successfully wish to be a boy; I remain impervious to all the efforts of all the editors of all the newspapers in the United States to dim my eye; and there must be many another eye like mine, or else it is unbelievably unique. I lean back in my chair, close my undimmed eye, and do my best; but, contrary to all editorial expectation, I can summon no desire to go barefooted, fish with a bent pin, or revisit the old swimming-hole

Where the elm and the chestnut o'ershadowed the
bowl,
And tempered the hot summer weather.

I prefer a beach and a bathing-suit and somebody my own age. Yet do not think, shocked reader, that I am unsympathetic with youth. I am more sympathetic — that is all — with my con-

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temporaries; and the thought forces itself upon me that boyhood is a narrow and conventional period, in which my own desire to go without shoes was exactly similar to my mother's determination to wear a bustle. Equally anxious to follow the fashion of our respective sets, neither understood the other; and I would no more have worn a bustle than my mother would have gone barefooted. My father, similarly thwarted in a single desire, would have cared less: his wider interests — politics, business, family, the local and world gossip that immersed him in his newspaper, art, literature, music, and the drama, to say nothing of professional baseball and pugilism (in which, however, many fathers and sons have a common interest) — would have absorbed his disappointment.

But my narrower world, so to speak,

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was all feet. An unconventional boy, as I think the most erudite student of boy-life and boy-psychology will admit, is much more rare than an unconventional man; and even then his unconventionality is likely to be imposed upon him "for his own good" by well-meaning but tyrannical parents. "I have known boys," wrote Uncle Jones, observing but not comprehending this characteristic fact, "when playing at 'Hare and hounds' and 'Follow my leader,' to scramble over hedges, leap over brooks, and mount up precipices, in a manner which they would not have dared to attempt, had it not been for the examples set them by their school-fellows; but," he adds, "I do not remember any instance of a boy imitating another on account of his good temper, patience, forbearance, principle, or piety."

Naturally not. You and I, Uncle

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Jones, might be expected to imitate each other's good temper, patience, forbearance, principle, or piety, — though I do not say that we would, — but from the point of view of a boy these virtues are unconventional. Their practice shocks and disconcerts the observer. The behavior of Sir Isaac Newton, when kicked in the stomach, was perfectly scandalous.

And what is there, after all, in the life of a boy, that a man would find interesting? Or that he may not do, if such is sufficiently his desire to “make” the time for it, as he makes time for his adult pleasures, and if he is not too old or too fat? He can spend his vacation at the old swimming-hole — but he never does it. He can go barefooted whenever he wishes: his mother can no longer prevent him. He can fish with a bent pin in the porcelain bathtub, —

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adding a goldfish to make the pursuit more exciting, — every morning before he takes his bath. He can chase butterflies; here and there, indeed, a man makes a profession of it, and institutions of learning call him an entomologist, and pay him much honor and a small salary. Nobody forbids him to enlarge his mental horizon by reading the lives of criminals and detectives; and I can myself direct him to many an entertaining book, which is at once far worse and far better, morally and artistically, than the sober narratives that Old Sleuth used to write by the yard for boys to read by stealth. He can roll a hoop; in many cases it would do him a world of good to roll it down to the office in the morning and back home at night. If he can persuade other ageing men, wishful of renewed boyhood, to join with him, he can play at marbles, tick, puss-in-

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the-corner, hop-sotch, ring-taw, and "Hot beans ready buttered." (Uncle Jones mentions these games. I do not remember all of them myself, but "Hot beans ready buttered" sounds especially interesting.) And where better than in some green, quiet corner at the Country Club? And why, if you *will* raise the question of conventionality, why more foolish than golf, or folk-dancing?

But what he cannot do is to assume the boy's unconsciousness of his own mortality. What he cannot unload is his own consciousness of responsibility to and for others. Life, in short, has provided the man with a worrying company of creditors of whom the boy knows nothing — Creditor Cost-of-Living, Creditor Ambition, Creditor Conscience, and Creditor Death. And the boy is unmarried! It is even claimed by

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one philosopher of my acquaintance that this is why men wish they were once more boys. I grant the plausibility of this opinion; for the more a man is devoted to his wife and family, the more he is beset and worried by these troublesome creditors, the more, one may reasonably argue, he feels the need of time to meet his obligations, and is likely now and then to envy the boy his narrow, conventional, but immortal-feeling life.

Uncle Jones misses, I think, this fundamental fact. He is always trying to destroy the boy's sense of immortality in this world by trying to persuade him to read the Bible and prepare for immortality in the next. "When a boy first begins his A B C," says Uncle Jones, "it is terrible work for him for a short time; yet how soon he gets over it, and begins to read! And, then, what a pleasure to

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be able to read a good and pleasant book! Oh, it is worthwhile to go through the trouble of learning to read fifty times over, to obtain the advantage of reading the Bible."

III

ON MEETING THE BELOVED

Now it is a quaint Oddity of thys State and Myserie of Loue that youre trew Louer combines the opposyte qualities of a deepe Humilitie and a loftie Conceit of Hymselfe. For with respect to this, hys Mistresse, he believes himself a most inferior Person, and as it were a mere Worme; yet if he doth suspect her to regard any Man els as his Equal, he is consumed with great Astonishment and raging Indignation, for this same Loue is a great Destroyer of Common Sense in its Victimes. For he thinketh Hymselfe inferior to her because he is her Louer, and superior to all Men els for the same silly Reason. — ANATOMIE OF LOUE.

To any sensitive man, not yet armored by the indifference that comes of being

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married himself, there is cause for apprehension in the prospect of meeting for the first time that person, male or female, whom somebody he knows and loves has recently agreed to marry. The event, when it comes, is unavoidable, nor is there any period in adult life when it may not happen, or anybody we know so old that he or she may not occasion it. Fact is more romantic, or at any rate remains romantic much later in life, than fiction. Only the other day I read in the newspaper of a man of one hundred and thirty-five years who had just subjected his little circle to this formality. Very likely the newspaper exaggerated, but the case undermines the security that one ordinarily feels in his relationship with the ageing.

Now it needs no argument that to be happy in the happiness of others is an inexpensive pleasure and well worth

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cultivating. Other things being equal, one should go dancing and singing to his first meeting with another's beloved. Bright-colored flowers, be she sixteen or sixty, should blossom, to his imagination, from the granite curb along his way; and, though a foolish convention may repress the song and dance, yet should he walk as if shod with the most levitating heels ever made from the liveliest of live rubber, and sing merrily in his heart.

But, thus to enter into the happiness of another, one must see and feel, as if for himself, some good and sufficient reason for that happiness; and the deep, insoluble mystery essential to all proper betrothals is that this good and sufficient reason is not necessarily visible: these two are happy-mad, and how shall anybody who is sane enter into their lunacy?

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Mr. Harvey Todd, 2d, — to take the first name that comes to mind, — has become engaged to Miss Margaret Lemon; Miss Lemon to Mr. Todd. Well and good. Nature, which, for some reason that mankind has long curiously and vainly sought to penetrate, wishes to continue the human race, is, one may believe, reasonably well satisfied. It is one job among many. But the satisfaction of Mr. Todd and Miss Lemon, if it could be put to such haberdashery use, would girdle the Equator, and the ends, tied in a true lover's knot, would flutter beyond the farthest visible star. Men and women have become engaged in the past; men and women will become engaged in the future; but this engagement of Harvey Todd and Margaret Lemon is and will ever remain unique — and so whoever is now called upon to appraise one party to this wonder and con-

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gratulate the other, may well be troubled. He is not so much afraid of what he may do and say, — for any man may hope to achieve a hard, quick, almost sobbing pressure of the hand and a few muttered words, — as of the way, in spite of himself, that he will look when he does and says it; there, indeed, the amateur actor profits by his hobby. There is, to be sure, the saving chance that Miss Lemon (or Mr. Todd) may so pleasurably affect him that the ordeal will be less difficult than he anticipates: there is even the rare chance that he may *instantly and completely agree with Mr. Todd's estimate of Miss Lemon*; but this is the happy-madness itself, and certainly not desirable under the circumstances. There is the possibility, even more rare and less desirable, that Miss Lemon, seeing him for the first time, *will instantly and completely prefer*

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him to Mr. Todd. There is the possibility that he may recoil with horror from Miss Lemon (or Mr. Todd), or be recoiled from, or that both may recoil simultaneously, falling over, figuratively, on their backs, and being picked up and carried away unconscious, and in opposite directions, by surprised onlookers. His whole nature may, in short, instinctively run toward, or away from, the beloved; and between these extremes lies a gamut of intermediary emotions, which at the moment he would hardly wish to uncover. This stiff and geometrical smile, he asks himself at the worst, can it deceive anybody? this hypocritical mutter of congratulation, does it proceed from his own or an ice chest? Nor is he much relieved when Mr. Todd or Miss Lemon, as the case may be, proves how genuine appeared his smile, how sincere his mutter, by asking him in

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affectionate detail what he thinks of the other — a procedure which should be legally forbidden the newly engaged, under penalty of being refused a marriage license for at least ten years.

This state of mind in lovers, so important to those who are called upon to meet the beloved for the first time, has engaged the attention of essayists, conversationalists, and philosophers. "They fall at once," wrote Stevenson, "into that state in which another person becomes to us the very gist and centre point of God's creation, and demolishes our laborious theories with a smile; in which our ideas are so bound up with the one master-thought, that even the trivial cares of our own person become so many acts of devotion, and the love of life itself is translated into a wish to remain in the same world with so precious and desirable a fellow creature.

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And all the while their acquaintances look on in stupor."

"No, sir," said Dr. Johnson, promptly improving Mr. Boswell's milder assertion that love is like being enlivened with champagne, "No, sir. Admiration and love are like being intoxicated with champagne" — an opinion, one hopes, that will not some day be made the basis of a nation-wide campaign to prohibit falling in love.

"His friends," said Ralph Waldo Emerson, "find in her a likeness to her mother, or her sisters, or to persons not of her blood. The lover sees no resemblance except to summer evenings and diamond mornings, to rainbows and the song of birds."

Mr. Todd and Miss Lemon (so like a rainbow) are impervious to any lack of enthusiasm that you or I, dear, unselfish, sensitive reader, may fear to exhibit

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when either leads us the other by the hand and says, "This is IT." Ours, if any, will be the suffering. It may even happen that Miss Lemon or Mr. Todd — Mr. Todd or Miss Lemon beaming consent and approval — will suggest that *we call her (or him) Margaret (or Harvey)*.

Yet from another point of view, but this is a selfish one, apprehension is justified in proportion to the sensitive man's previous intimacy with the individual whose beloved he is about to meet. For until that meeting is over, "previous" is the word for it: whatever opinion the beloved may form of him will determine the degree and manner of its continuance. If Miss Lemon disapproves of him, though Mr. Todd has hitherto loved him as Damon did Pythias, all is over; if Mr. Todd disapproves of him, though he has known

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Miss Lemon from her perambulator, all is over. A pale ghost, he may, in either case, sometimes hang his spectral hat in the Todd hallway, and even extend his phantom legs under the Todd mahogany; but ALL IS OVER. Divinely harmonious as they seem, these two will never agree to let him try, however humbly and conscientiously, to cultivate the inexpensive pleasure of being happy in their happiness. He becomes what no self-respecting man can wish to be — a fly in the ointment. Most cases, fortunately, are not so serious: he will be given a reasonable chance to make a place for himself on this new plane to which Mr. Todd and Miss Lemon have been translated; but it is always a question whether he can enter that plane himself, or must hereafter be content with hearing from his former friend through a medium. For he has not, as is so often gracefully

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but emptily said on these trying occasions, been enriched by the acquisition of a new friend : he has simply exchanged Miss Lemon or Mr. Todd (as the case may be) for a composite, a Toddlemon or a Lemontodd — a few years will show which. He must make the best he can of that composite. He who was formerly described as (let us say) “my friend, Mr. Popp,” becomes, if he becomes at all, “our friend, Mr. Popp”; and if ever he hears himself being introduced as “Mr. Todd’s friend, Mr. Popp,” or as “Mrs. Todd’s friend, Mr. Popp,” he had better go away as soon as politeness permits, and never come back. Never.

I speak, of course, in generalities; for there are no rules immutably governing all cases, and life is mellowed and beautified by shining, sensible examples, in which Mr. Todd and Miss Lemon be-

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come one, yet realize that in many respects, being human, they must still remain two; then, indeed, the congratulator may actually be enriched by the acquisition of a new friend — but not instantly, as one is enriched by the acquisition of a new hat. Yet it is always the wiser part, in preparing to meet a beloved, to prepare for the worst.

These are evidently the apprehensions of a bachelor, sensitive but not unselfish; the mental attitude is different with a student, philosopher, and idealist who, thinking not of himself, contemplates another's marriage in the calm, intelligent way, having as yet no beloved in which he can contemplate his own. Such a one weighs. Such a one is conscious that, little as *he* knows the beloved of Mr. Todd or Miss Lemon, there is grave danger that Mr. Todd knows Miss Lemon, or Miss Lemon Mr.

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Todd, hardly better. This happy-madness may not only be a delusion, as a calm outside intelligence contemplates it, but it may be a snare. Mistakes do happen. There are known cases in which the happy lunatic has been mistaken in a beloved not once but often; and the persistent effort of these poor madmen and madwomen to correct one mistake by making another is one of the most discussed and pitiable phases of our civilization. The calm intelligence must balance also the practical aspects of the business, its risks and liabilities as well as its profits; and so serious is the enterprise when thus examined that he can hardly fail to be terrified for anybody he knows and loves who is undertaking it.

O Harvey! Harvey! (or Margaret! Margaret!)

Tact is what he will pray for. And if

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his prayer is granted, when Mr. Todd (or Miss Lemon) asks him, "Now, honestly, what do you think of her (or him)?" he will say, "Of course I do not know Miss Lemon (or Mr. Todd) very well *yet*, but I have never met anybody whom I *hoped* to know and like better." Which will be quite true, and please the twittering questioner much more than if he said, "Oh, I don't know. I *don't* know."

IV

THIS IS A FATHER

*Proud Parent, in this little life
Yourself reflected see,
And think how Baby will progress
A man like you to be!*

*So stout, so strong, so wise, and when
Sufficient years have flown,
Like you the happy parent of
A baby of his own!*

*And when that unborn baby grows
To be a man like you,
Oh, think how proud that man will be
To be a parent too.*

*So think, when life oppresses you
And you are feeling sad,
A million, million, million times
You'll be a happy dad.*

— THE FATHER'S ANTHEM.

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IN the life of man fatherhood is so likely to happen, that I wonder Shakespeare did not select father as a natural, and indeed inevitable, successor to lover in his well-known seven ages. He chose the soldier, "full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard," presumably because such soldiers were common in Elizabethan London. But fathers must have been more so: they must have gone in droves past the tavern window where Shakespeare (as what we now call the "wets" so like to think) sat at his ale-stained table, dipping now his quill in an inkwell, and again his nose in a tankard; but they seem to have made no impression. Indeed this unromantic, necessary figure, composite as it is of all sorts and conditions of men, has never appealed strongly to the poets; perhaps it is their revenge because fathers so seldom read poetry.

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Whatever else a man does, whether he lives by banking or burglary, ascends to the presidency or descends to the gutter, he is likely to be a father: they are as countless as the pebbles on a beach or the leaves in Vallombrosa, and the few who evade paternity evade also the purpose for which nature evidently created them, and go through life thumbing their noses, so to speak, at Divine Providence. So taken for granted is this vocation of fatherhood, and so little considered in comparison with other masculine employments, that no correspondence school offers a course, and many a young man undertakes to raise children with less hesitation than he would start in to raise chickens. Some accept fatherhood with joy, others with resignation, like a recently wedded young Italian who cobbles my shoes, and spoke the other day of his own new little one.

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“Zee fadder and zee modder,” he said, “zey work and zey slave for zee leetle one. But what-a good? When he is grow up, he say, ‘To hell wiz zee fadder and zee modder!’” And so, as Shakespeare may have decided, there is no universal type of fatherhood, nor has the imagination of mankind created one, as in the case of mothers, for convenient literary and conversational use. The lines of the balladist, —

With his baby on his knee
He’s as happy as can be, —

were, to be sure, something in this direction; but they have become so wholly associated with humor, that even the late Mr. Rogers, had he known the ballad, could hardly have found inspiration therein for a group; nor Shakespeare adapted the lines to describe seriously one of his seven ages. He might have scribbled experimentally, —

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Then the father,
Infant on knee, and happy like the clam, —

but that would have been the end of it. He would have crossed out the experiment, and taken another drink.

Father, in fact, follows Mother, in the mind of the general, so far behind that he is almost invisible, a tiny object on red wheels at the end of a string. But the little fellow carries a pocketbook: when Mother needs money she pulls in the string, and he comes up in a hurry. And, as is usually the case with popular conceptions, this odd, erroneous notion, which most fathers seem cheerfully enough to accept, has no doubt its historic foundation, and derives from the unquestionable supremacy of Mother in the beginning. At that period, indeed, it is hardly to be expected that any father should feel immediately *en rapport* with his new-born child, or become

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intimately associated with its helpless, flower-like life. Ever since the idea, which has now so long lost its original element of bewildering surprise, yet remains always somewhat surprising, first dawned upon a human father and mother that *this baby* belonged to *them*, conditions have inexorably consigned the infant to the care of its mother, while its father pursued elsewhere the equally necessary business of providing sustenance for the family. A division of labor was imperative: somebody must stay at home in the cave and tend the baby, somebody must go out in the woods and hustle for provisions. Maternity was, as it must have been, already a feminine habit, but paternity was something new and unexpected; and although I suspect, in many cases, this astonishing discovery was followed by speedy flight. Trueheart the First took up

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his responsibilities and his stone axe together.

The horror is recorded with which Dr. Johnson regarded the idea of being left alone in a castle with a new-born child; and this feeling in so civilized a man was no doubt an echo of the emotion with which poor, bewildered, primitive, but faithful Trueheart would have envisaged being left alone in the cave with his new-born baby: the sense of relief, of gayety, of something definite and within his capabilities to do, with which the young father nowadays takes his hat and starts for the office, must be much the same as that with which Trueheart took his stone axe and started for the woods.

Thus, in the very inception of the human family, fatherhood became subordinate to motherhood; and so, because conditions after all have not fundamentally

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changed, it has ever since continued. "Mothers' Day," for example, is celebrated with enthusiasm; "Fathers' Day" remains a mere humorous suggestion, a kind of clown in the editorial circus. Then as now, moreover, in the earlier life of the child, Father, although not quite as useless as a vermiform appendix, was and is of very little importance.

I am not forgetting — for I do them an honor I can hardly express — those fathers who walk, all through the night, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, across an otherwise silent room, that the motion incidental to their perambulation may soothe a mysteriously afflicted babe to sleep; nor am I unaware that Father sometimes pushes baby's wicker chariot, pausing ever and anon to pick up and restore some article of infant use or pleasure that the little

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rascal has mischievously thrown overboard, and in many other touching ways patiently tries to make himself useful. These offices are almost impersonal. Any father could perform them for any baby: a mechanical father, ingeniously contrived to walk back and forth, push, or pick up and restore, according as the operator wound him up and pressed the proper button, would do as well. Only in proportion as the child begins to sit up and take intelligent notice does Father's position become responsible, important, and precarious. From that time on, his behavior has consequences.

Fatherhood, in fact, is a mighty serious business — yet even to-day many a father seems to have made no more conscious preparation for it than had our astonished ancestor, Trueheart. My friend Mr. Todd, for example, meets Miss Margaret Lemon at an afternoon

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tea. A blind attachment (I am putting the case with unimpassioned simplicity, for this is no novel) springs up (God knows why) between them. If Harvey Todd had been Faust, Mephistopheles would have wasted time trying to tempt him with any Margaret but a Lemon; and if Miss Lemon had been that other Margaret, Mephistopheles would have had to produce Harvey Todd, who, I am glad to believe, would have promptly told him to go to the Devil.

And so Mr. Todd becomes engaged; and after a decent interval, he becomes a husband; and after another decent interval he becomes a father — and who more surprised than he! Even as we congratulate him, clinking together the long-handled spoons that come in the ice-cream sodas with which all good fellows now celebrate such an occasion, it is perfectly evident that Harvey Todd

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has given hardly more thought to the tremendously important and interesting relation of father and son than might reasonably have been expected of little Harvey, Jr. Mind you, I do not attempt to say how he shall conduct himself: that is his business; but as he begins, so is he likely to go on to the end of the chapter, when little Harvey is no longer a roly-poly human plaything but a great big man like himself. And according as he *has* conducted himself, that great big man will bless him or curse him or regard him with varying degrees of affection or contumely. If he has never thought of it before, it is something for him to think about now, seriously, in the brief respite while his duties are perambulatory, and a mechanical father, cleaned, oiled, and wound up once a day, would do just as well. Fill the glasses again, O white-coated Dispenser, and

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make mine chocolate. For this man is a father! He has created new life, or clothed in mortality an immortal spirit (though he does n't know which), and here he stands, — I said chocolate, — and Solomon, with all his wisdom and all his experience, could not tell him what to do about it.

So we clink our long-handled spoons.

For in sober truth, as one reads the reputed wisdom of Solomon on this topic, fatherhood seems to be in a state of evolution and to have advanced materially since he was a father. "He that spareth his rod," said Solomon in the complacent, dogmatic way that seems to have charmed the Queen of Sheba more than it would charm me, "hateth his son: But he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes." And again, "The rod and the reproof giveth wisdom." We know better nowadays: the rod has

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become a figure of speech, the occasions that even appear to excuse its use are fewer and fewer, and when they happen, the modern practice may be described quite simply as a laying-on of the hand. Here, however, is something objective for a father to do — an occasion when Mother pulls in the string, and Father, mercifully hanging back on his red wheels, comes up in a hurry, and what has to be done is done. But the procedure, over the centuries, has compelled thought; the idea has ripened slowly in the paternal mind that it is an unwise waste of strength and emotion to attempt at one end what may be better accomplished at the other; and in this revolutionary discovery there must have been pioneers whose success as fathers was measured by the affection and respect of worthy sons. Hamlet's father, I believe, rarely, if ever, spanked young

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Hamlet, and never in such mood and manner as to make the little Prince of Denmark smart at the injustice of the high-handed proceeding. Mr. Todd can do no better than follow the elder Hamlet's example; and in so doing he will show himself wiser than Solomon, with his old-fashioned insistence on proverbs and a stout stick. "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck," said Solomon (and here perhaps is the origin of the phrase to "get it in the neck"), "shall suddenly be broken, and that beyond remedy"; which is an attitude of mind that the best thought certainly no longer considers conducive to the best fatherly results. The book for Mr. Todd to read is not Solomon's Book of Proverbs but Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to his Children.

If Solomon had been right, fatherhood would be easy; but the simple fact that

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even you or I, gentle Reader, being often reproved, will harden our necks, reveals the widespread tendency to ossification that has gradually discredited the didactic and strong-arm system. If I may compose a proverb myself —

The wise man maketh no enemy of his neighbor;
And the wise father maketh a friend of his son.

But it is easier to compose a proverb than to apply it, and friendship, which can be built only on a good foundation of common understanding and truthful speech, is here especially difficult. "To speak truth," says Stevenson, "there must be a moral equality or else no respect; and hence between parent and child intercourse is apt to degenerate into a verbal fencing bout, and misapprehensions to become ingrained. And there is another side to this; for the parent begins with an imperfect notion of the child's character, formed in early

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years or during the equinoctial gales of youth; to this he adheres, noting only the facts that suit with his preconceptions; and wherever a person fancies himself unjustly judged, he at once and finally gives up the effort to speak truth."

Somehow or other our Mr. Todd, if he wishes to make the best of his paternity, must overcome the handicap imposed by his wider mental experience and his acquired moral distinctions between rightness and wrongness; somehow or other he must create in Harvey, Jr., an affectionate regard for his jolly old father that shall make it a line of least resistance for the little fellow to follow and imitate his jolly old father's opinions and wishes. Often, indeed, if he is wise, Mr. Todd will dare to seem foolish. "Foolishness," said Solomon, "is bound up in the heart of the child" — and

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there he stopped, after adding his usual suggestion about the rod as a remedy. But it is bound up also, O Solomon, in every heart that beats, and is one thing at least that Mr. Todd and little Harvey have in common to start with.

And so the father plays his unapplauded part — “tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited,” as Polonius might enumerate. He wants no applause. He wants no “Father’s Day.” He wants no statue. He wants no advice. Yet it seems to me that a figure and character has lately been perpetuated in statuary of various kinds that answers all practical purposes, though most of us think of the original as a Great American rather than as a Great Father.

V

ON BEING A LANDLORD

In an informal, but practical way, a landlord is, and must be, a Justice of the Domestic Peace. If one tenant murders another tenant, the case passes beyond his jurisdiction: he has no power of the black cap. But if one tenant annoys another (which may eventually lead to homicide more or less justifiable), the case comes to his court: he is both jury and judge, and can in extremity pronounce sentence of eviction. But so many and subtile are the ways in which tenants annoy each other that to be a perfectly just landlord would demand a wisdom greater than Solomon's.
— APARTMENTS TO LET.

ON my consciousness are impressed the names of fourteen married women

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and one (so far as I know) unmarried man: Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Cawkins, Mrs. Trolley, Mrs. Karsen, Mrs. Le Maire, Mrs. Barber, Mrs. Sibley, Mrs. Carrot, Mrs. Mahoney, Mrs. Hopp, Mrs. Ranee, Mrs. Button, and Charlie Wah Loo. Their husbands I hardly know at all; indeed, if Mrs. Carrot should introduce Mr. Hopp to me by that dear title, — as, for example, ‘my husband, Mr. Hopp,’ — I should hastily readjust my ideas and decide that Mrs. Carrot was really Mrs. Hopp, and Mrs. Hopp really Mrs. Carrot. Charlie Wah Loo *may* be married; he devotes his days to the washtub and ironing-board, and his nights (I like to think) to what Mr. Sax Rohmer, author of “The Yellow Claw,” mysteriously mentions as “ancient, unnamable evils.” In feudal times, however, I should have known them all better.

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Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! that brave
little company —

BUTTON	RANEE
HOPP	MAHONEY
CARROT	SIBLEY
BARBER	LE MAIRE
KARSEN	TROLLEY
CAWKINS	BROWN
SMITH	MURPHY

— would have marched sturdily under my banner, each in his stout leathern jerkin, manfully carrying his trusty pike, halberd, long bow, short bow, or arbalest; and with them Charlie Wah Loo would have trotted along by himself as an interesting human curiosity — or, perhaps, in a cage. Each in his time would have done me fealty, saying, “Know ye this, my lord, that I will be faithful and true unto you, and faith to you will bear for the tenements which I claim to hold of you; and that I will lawfully do to you the customs and services which I ought to do at the

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terms assigned. So help me God and his saints."

Those, in retrospect, were pleasant days for the landlord, when rent was paid in loyal service and a few dozen eggs, or what not. But all that now remains of the ancient custom is that they continue, vicariously, through the agency of their beloved helpmates, to pay me rent. In this sense, Charlie Wah Loo, with his washtub and irons, is his own beloved helpmate.

Briefly, I am a landlord. But do not hate me, gentle reader, for I am of that mild, reticent, and reluctant kind to whom even collecting the rent, to say nothing of raising it, is more a pain than a pleasure. There are such landlords, products of evolution, inheritance, and a civilization necessarily based on barter. Our anxious desire is to exact no more than a "fair rent"; at our weakest,

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when a tenant gets in arrears and, evidently enough, cannot catch up, our line of least resistance would be to go quietly away and leave that tenement to the tenant, his heirs and assigns forever. It is unpleasant, and becomes more so every time, to remind him that he owes us money. Only the inexorable harshness of our own overlords compels us, hating ourselves the while, to be strict.

I have seen it stated as a scientific deduction that "in the beginning man probably dwelt in trees after the fashion of his ape-like ancestors. He lived on nuts, fruits, roots, wild honey, and perhaps even bird's eggs, grubs from rotten wood, and insects." And my own experience leads me to feel that there was much to be said for this way of life, though I draw the line at birds' eggs, grubs from rotten wood, and insects, at which items of an earlier menu even the

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scientific mind seems to baulk. But it may well have happened that some strong fellow presently got possession of an especially desirable tree, and allowed others to share its branches only if they kept him supplied with provisions. Thus may landlordry have been established.

Millions of years have passed since then, — a mere flicker in the great movie of eternity, — and we are still, many of us, living in trees; but the trees have been cut down and made into houses, of which at present there are not enough to go round. We have outgrown our simple arboreal diet, developed and perfected the hen (no small achievement in itself), invented underwear, and in countless other cunning ways have created a complex civilization. Century by century, generation by generation, we have acquired tastes and conventions that prevent us from returning to the

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simple, happy, uncomplicated life of our ape-like ancestors. And in this civilization that we have made, the figure of the landlord bulks large and overshadows, and might, indeed, be likened to Rodin's Thinker, thinking, in this instance, about how much more he shall raise the rent. One must assume, of course, that he is thinking about it just before taking his morning bath.

It is not my purpose to dwell upon those disgraceful landlords who profiteer. I am concerned rather with the character of the Perfect Landlord, a just man, respected, if not loved (within reason), by fourteen married women and a Charlie Wah Loo. But this admirable ideal seems impracticable. I know a landlord who speaks with pleasure of the social aspect of collecting his rents; but his is a selected tenantry, for he lets apartments only to what he calls "nice

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people," whose society he feels reasonably certain he will enjoy on rent-day, and whose financial status, he also feels reasonably certain, is and will remain such that no painful embarrassment on this sordid but necessary side of their relations will ever cast a gloom over his visit. Yet even so, I gather that there are sometimes breaks in the golden chain, when the nice tenant chats with a too feverish interest about life and things in general, and the sordid aspect cannot be glossed over by a casual "Ah, yes, the rent." Such breaks in the golden chain are the test of landlordry.

I am reminded of a little one-act play which I have just written entitled

THE RENT

CHARACTERS: MRS. BUTTON, a tenant.

I, a landlord.

SCENE: *A tenement, owned by I, but*

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referred to as MRS. BUTTON'S, which is perhaps more correct.

MRS. BUTTON *is washing dishes. The room steams. Slow creaks outside as of a reluctant man coming upstairs. MRS. BUTTON smiles enigmatically. A knocking at the door, as in "Macbeth."*

MRS. BUTTON. Come in. (*I enters.*)

I (*laughing with affected lightness.*)
Ah, good-morning, Mrs. Button. I've come for the rent.

MRS. BUTTON (*weeping*). It's not me, as ye know, sir, that likes to be behind with th' rint. I'm proud.

I (*touched in spite of himself by the sight of a strong woman in tears*). I know that. But you've been here seven months, Mrs. Button, without —

MRS. BUTTON (*wiping her eyes*). Yis, I'm an old tenant, and 't would break me heart to go. An' me goin' to begin

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payin' reg'lar only nixt week, sir. It's th' only home I've got, an' it's cruel harrrd to leave it.

I (*sternly*). Very well. Very well. I shall *expect* the money next week. Good-day, Mrs. Button.

MRS. BUTTON. Good-day, sir.

I *exits*. MRS. BUTTON *resumes washing dishes, smiling enigmatically. The room steams, and steps are heard going hastily downstairs, fainter and fainter.*

(CURTAIN)

It is a grave responsibility — this power to dispossess other human beings of their little home — to say nothing of the recurrent task of making them behave themselves in it. Perhaps, on some other and happier plane of being, all landlords will be just and all tenants reasonable of disposition and stable of income. Then, indeed, the landlord

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need have nothing in common with a well-known walrus, of whom it is told that, in dealing with certain oysters, "with sobs and tears he sorted out those of the largest size." But something might even now be done by compulsory psychopathic — I had nearly said psychopathic — treatment; for thus the effort to solve the rent problem would go to the soil in which it is rooted, and no complicated laws would be needed. Landlords and tenants, in fact everybody, would have to take the treatment, — including, of course, the psychopathic practitioners, who would treat each other, — but it would be a fine thing for the world if it worked.

One sees in imagination the profiteering landlord, after looking long and intently at a bright object, say a five-dollar gold-piece, dropping peacefully asleep; one hears the voice of the scien-

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tist repeating, firmly and monotonously, "When you wake up you will never want anything more than a just rent — a just rent — a just rent — a just rent."

One sees this profiteering landlord, once more wide awake, busy at his desk with pencil and paper, scowling conscientiously as he endeavors to figure out exactly what a just rent will be. Investment, so much; taxes; insurance; repairs; laths and plaster here, wall-paper there; water, light, putty, paint, janitor, Policeman's Annual Ball, postman at Christmas, wear and tear on landlord's shoes, etc., etc., etc., etc. — now, if ever, there is a tired business man.

Or, — to take another aspect of this great reform, — there is the sad case of Mrs. Murphy, who can no longer endure the children of Mrs. Trolley, who lives in the flat above her. They run and play, run and play; they produce in Mrs.

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Murphy a conviction that presently the floor will give way, and the children, still running and playing, will come right through on her poor head. Yet it is the nature of children to run and play, run and play: the landlord cannot, try as he may, persuade Mrs. Trolley to chain her offspring. So away, away to the Public Psychopathic Ward with poor Mrs. Murphy. "Madam, when you awake, the sound of running feet over your poor head will suggest the joys of innocent childhood, and you will be very happy when they run and play, run and play—happy all day—run and play—run and play—happy all day—run and play."

But alas, so far even psychopathic treatment cannot promise to stabilize incomes. There must still be times when the just landlord must say to his tenant, "All is over between us; we must part forever — and at once." To which,

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judging by the tenor of some of the laws that have lately been suggested, the tenant may presently answer, "All right, you Old Devil. This is the tenth of the month, and I'll shake the dust of your disgraceful premises off my feet two years and six months from to-morrow."

It's a puzzling time for us landlords. Not long ago I felt compelled to raise the rent of fourteen married women and one (so far as I know) unmarried Chinaman. And then, overcome by conscience, I sat down and figured out a just rent. And when I had finished I came upon a distressing discovery. I had raised the rent of neither Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Cawkins, Mrs. Trolley, Mrs. Karsen, Mrs. Le Maire, Mrs. Barber, Mrs. Sibley, Mrs. Carrot, Mrs. Mahoney, Mrs. Hopp, Mrs. Ranee, Mrs. Button, nor Charlie Wah Loo, anything like enough.

VI

OLD FLIES AND OLD MEN

To-day, my dear, I greatly astonished my grandson by standing on my head, and by entering the kitchen by turning a back-somersault through the door — exercises which I frequently practise for the benefit of my digestion, but not often in public. His bewilderment at seeing a man of my years perform such acrobatics was most comical. But there, there, one must amuse one's self with the young sometimes. I have thought more or less seriously of advising these exercises for general use; but few men have had the advantage of being brought up in a circus, and what seems easy to me would no doubt present insuperable obstacles to most. The main thing, after all, is not to grow old before your time, because the silly younger gen-

OLD FLIES AND OLD MEN

eration likes to flatter itself by thinking you antediluvian. — LETTERS OF FATHER WILLIAM.

FEW men read Shakespeare, and so, fortunately enough, few think of themselves as being some day a pantaloon — lean and slippered (as Shakespeare described this sixth age of man), with spectacles on nose, his youthful hose, well-saved, a world too wide for his shrunk shank, and his big, manly voice, turning again to childish treble, operating like a penny whistle when he tries to converse. But the Bard made a bogey: at any rate, there are fewer pantaloons visible than there probably were in Elizabethan England; and the sixth age of man appears more logically to offer a kind of Indian summer that is well worth living for. Shakespeare, it seems to me, slipped a cog in his sequence; and I prefer to think of Cornaro, the Italian

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centenarian, who began at forty to restrict his diet (though this I care less for), and wrote of himself at eighty-three: "I enjoy a happy state of body and mind. I can mount my horse without assistance; I climb steep hills; and I have lately written a play abounding in innocent wit and humor. And I am a stranger to those peevish and morose humors which fall so often to the lot of old age."

Granting some other choice of mental employment, — for writing that kind of a play seems nowadays too useless an occupation even for an old man's leisure, — this is the kind of an old man I should like to be.

In the light of recent scientific research with flies, Cornaro probably inherited his longevity from long-lived ancestors, and would have done about as well on a less restricted diet: he might

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reasonably have lasted as long if not as comfortably. Ideas have changed since Pope asked himself, —

Why has not man a microscopic eye? —

and promptly answered, —

For this plain reason, Man is not a Fly.
Say what the use, were finer optics giv'n,
T' inspect a mite, not comprehend the heav'n?

Man since then has provided himself with a remarkably good microscopic eye. He has inspected the mite, and discovered resemblances between this innocently disgusting little insect and himself, which make it desirable, in some cases, to suspend the swatter, and study instead of assassinate. Granting that the proper study of mankind is Man, the proper study of mankind is Flies; for the days of a fly present an entertaining and instructive parallel to the years of a man: a seventy-year-old man and a seventy-day-old fly are contem-

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poraries; other things being equal, they might almost be called twins. Confined in glass bottles and observed impartially from birth to burial, each baby fly, it appears, inherits a maximum number of days on this perplexing planet, and lives fewer according to the activity with which he expends his inheritance. If flies had copybooks one might compose a maxim for little flies to copy, —

Do not fly too much or fast,
And you will much longer last.

Thus one scientific gentleman has watched, godlike, the lives of 5836 flies — 3216 fair flies (if I may so call them), and 2620 of their natural, and only, admirers — from their separate birth-minutes till each in turn paid his or her little debt to nature, and passed away. It is an odd thing to contemplate — this self-election of a man to the positions of guardian, health officer, divine provi-

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dence, nursemaid, matchmaker, clergyman, physician, undertaker, and sexton to 5836 flies. Yet it redounds to his credit, and is another proof of the poet's contention that we men are superior: for what fly would ever think of studying *us* to find out anything about himself? And, by deduction, I, like the little fly, inherit my span of life, although either accident or a germ may get me if I don't watch out.

But even if man, like the fly, inherits his individual length of life, he will, again like the fly, go on living it with little concern as to whatever invisible string may be fastened to his inheritance. He will think hopefully that any ancestor he has had who died by violence or a germ might otherwise have lived to be as hale and hearty as Father William, that lively sage whose habit was to stand on his head at intervals, and to

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enter a door by turning a back-somersault. Heredity is still a mystery; the ancestry of free men is much more complicated than that of flies in bottles; and any of us, if he anxiously carried his genealogical research far enough back, would find a goodly number of forbears, prematurely carried off, from whom he might reasonably have inherited quite a lot of what the scientific mind calls the "hypothetical substance or substances which normally prevent old age and natural death." Flies growing gracefully old in glass bottles therefore need not worry us, and every ancestor who has been hanged is a reason for optimism.

And there is another reason even more valuable than a pendent ancestor. You and I, gentle Reader, have souls (though there may be times of discouragement when we wish we had n't), and old age is a mere trivial incident in our jolly

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eternal lives. Willy-nilly, we begin growing older, by the conventional measurement of time, with our first breath; but who can prove that we are not in reality very much older than we look in the beginning, and very much younger than we look in the end? I get these sober thoughts from the laboratory rather than the pulpit, from evolution rather than dogma. O aged fly, to whom your seventy days are a long life and your glass bottle a perfectly natural and normal world in which to have lived it! O aged man, to whom your seventy years are a long life, and who may also have lived it, for all you know, in a kind of glass bottle, big enough to contain comfortably this little planet and all the visible stars! Whoever respects age for its own sake must impartially salute you both.

“It is a man’s own fault,” said Dr.

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Johnson, then seventy years old, but no pantaloons, "it is from want of use, if the mind grows torpid in old age." And so plausible is this observation, that any reasonably intelligent man might make it to his wife at breakfast without at all astonishing her. Here, to be sure, one gets no help from flies in glass bottles who depart this world according as they fly more or fly less, for theirs apparently is a democracy in which no outside observer can yet say that any one fly thinks more or thinks less than another. A scientific study of 5836 old men (in biographies instead of bottles) would very likely do no more than verify the generalization that any thinker may make at breakfast. And this being the case, civilization tends naturally enough to reduce the number of pantaloons. Universal education, books, newspapers, magazines, politics, movies, anything

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and everything that to any degree employs and exercises the mind, postpones its torpidity; and statistics indicate that an increasing proportion of babies live to be middle-aged people — but a decreasing proportion of middle-aged people live to be old enough to become pantaloons. For many a not-so-very-promising baby survives nowadays who would have perished under earlier conditions; and many a man gets to middle life who would otherwise be dead already, and lacks the “pep,” as a popular magazine editor might say, to get very much further. What a survival of the fittest, for example, was that of the beautiful Galeria Copiola, who, I have read, made her first dazzling appearance in the theatre of ancient Rome at the age of ninety! She acted and danced; and Roman playgoers of seventy, sitting in the front rows, had opportunity to be-

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come madly infatuated with a charmer twenty years their senior, such as now falls only to the lot of the college undergraduate or the tired business man. And if anybody doubts this surprising youthfulness of Galeria, I offer the corroborative evidence of the seventeenth-century pamphlet, "The Olde, Olde, very Olde Man; or the Age and Long Life of Thomas Parr," in which John Taylor, the Water Poet, describes the pre-Adamite who was brought up to London at the age of 152, met the King, and had such a great good time in general, that his death nine months later was attributed to over-excitement.

He was of old Pythagoras' opinion
That green cheese was most wholesome with an onion;
Coarse meslin bread, and for his daily swig,
Milk, butter-milk, and water, whey and whig:
Sometimes metheglin, and by fortune happy,
He sometimes sipped a cup of ale most nappy.

(I have looked up "metheglin," and I find it to have been a "strong liquor

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made by mixing honey with water and flavoring it, yeast or some similar ferment being added, and the whole allowed to ferment." "Ale" was also a liquor, but made from malt. "Nappy" means heady and strong: "Nappie ale," says an old writer, was "so called because, if you taste it thoroughly, it will either catch you by the nape of the neck or cause you to take a nappe of sleepe." The use of these drinks, it may still be argued, shortened Parr's life; but the fly-research that I have mentioned seems to indicate that their tendency to decrease physical activity by inducing "nappes" may have materially helped him to conserve his inheritance of longevity.)

But these cases are exceptional, and for my part I have no desire to be the Thomas Parr of the twentieth or twenty-first century. It is more important to

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live right (and there, indeed, is a job for anybody!) than to live long; and old age, like young love, is often oversentimentalized. Mr. Boswell, I think, oversentimentalized it when he asked his long-suffering friend, "But, sir, would you not know old age? . . . I mean, sir, the Sphinx's description of it — morning, noon, and night. I would know night as well as morning and noon." And the doctor restored the subject to its proper place when he answered: "Nay, sir, what talk is this? Would you know the gout? Would you have decrepitude?" He might, indeed, have gone further. "Do you suppose, sir" (he might have added), "you will know night when you see it? Why, sir, what does a baby know about morning?"

So with Pantaloon: we comparative youngsters have only an external and objective idea of him — his slippers, his

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stockings, his peevish and morose humors, his feeble mirth and empty garrulity. What living is really like to him we cannot know until we are pantaloons ourselves, and then, mayhap, we shall have forgotten what living is like to us now; let it suffice that we shall probably be far less bothered by our shrunk shanks and piping voices than we now believe possible. At the same time, it will do no harm for some of us to "watch our step." Already I — and there must be many another like me — am sometimes a little peevish and a little morose; a mere *soupeçon* reasonably explainable by natural causes — but there it is! I am hardly aware of it myself. Yet when it is called to my attention by those nearest and dearest to me, I experience an odd, perverse inclination to be more peevish and more morose than before. I *enjoy*, I take a queer, twisted, unnat-

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ural, hateful, demoniac pleasure, like Mr. Hyde when Dr. Jekyll turned into him, in the idea of being more peevish and more morose. Here indeed is something to look out for: resist that inclination, and we are laying the foundation of a serene and respected old age; obey that impulse, and we comfort the Devil, and run the risk of some day becoming, not only old men, but old nuisances. I do not know, though I very much doubt, that one old fly is ever more peevish and morose than another old fly; but with mankind, whose superior intelligence so often makes trouble for his associates, the variations are visible. Savages, unhampered by the conventions of an artificial civilization, have efficiently knocked their elders on the head in consequence.

Let us, then, do our best to beat the Devil, and prepare for that Indian sum-

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mer, which, with all respect to Shakespeare, is the true sixth age of man. And they reach it best (to judge by some who have got there) who do their daily work with a good conscience, share their incidental joys with others, and meet their troubles in the spirit of that stout old seaman, Sir Andrew Barton, as I the other day saw his ballad quoted with reference to R. L. Stevenson: —

A little Ime hurt, but yett not slaine;
Ile but lye downe and bleede a while,
And then Ile rise and fight againe.

VII

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Now concernynge the Soule, it is a Queer Thyng consydering that it lives in the Bodie yett dieth nott; and so I conclude that the Soule was made separate, and thys Bodie for its brief use and tenement; and how it gets in and gets oute I cannot tell you. And belyke there bee all sortes and condicions of Soules, some goode, some bad, some so-so; but because Goode is better than Evil, and because they lyve in Eternity, the bad Soules will finde itt oute in time, and become goode; and the so-so Soules will learn wisdom, and cease of their foolishnesse. But why they were nott alle made alyke to start, that I cannot tell you; nor juste how they was made. —
THE SAGE'S OWNE BOKE.

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It was a poetess, I am glad to say, and not a poet, who wrote the once popular lines: —

Backward, flow backward, O tide of the years!
I am so weary of toil and of tears, —
Toil without recompense, tears all in vain, —
Take them, and give me my childhood again.

Many a voice no doubt sagged under this load of pathos as it read "Rock Me to Sleep, Mother" to a little group of sympathetic listeners; but if such melancholics are to be set on paper, and circulated in print, I am unchivalrous enough to wish that joyless occupation on the gentler sex. Most of us perform prodigies of toil, which seem to receive scant recompense, and shed figuratively many a bucket of seemingly useless tears. But I do not imagine that this sad poetess was half as badly off as she seemed to think; and, more than that, she had only to wait long enough, and keep alive long enough, to get her child-

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hood back without asking for it. Time, the Groceryman, in due season would hand her a second childhood in many respects “just as good” as the first; for we who are betwixt and between can observe an unintelligent ignorance of later troubles in one condition, neatly balanced by an unintelligent forgetfulness of them in the other. Our lugubrious poetess, one might say, was neither more nor less than asking the tide of the years obligingly to assist her to commit suicide. Had her request been granted, there would have been one more child in the world—and one less poetess.

An impressive parallel may, indeed, be drawn between these two childhoods—the first a period of dependence upon its elders, and the second of dependence on its youngers, and each, to the reflective observer, a pretty evenly balanced reversal of the other. It is as if, in the

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beginning, the whole family of recognizable human characteristics, Curiosity, Memory, Affection, Dislike, Ambition, Love, Hate, Good Nature, Bad Temper, and all the rest of them, were moving, one after another, into a new house; and as if, in the end, the whole family, one after another, were leaving an old one. The very youngest and the very oldest men in the world seem equally equipped for living in it — “sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything”; and Baby, a little older, when he goes out in his perambulator is much like ancient Thomas Parr being conveyed to London as a human curiosity in a “litter and two horses (for the more easy carriage of a man so enfeebled and worn with age). . . . And to cheere up the olde man and make him merry, there was an antique-faced fellow, called Jacke, or John the Foole.”

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Why, I myself, meeting a baby in a perambulator, have made such antic faces that I might fairly have been called Jacke, or John the Foole, by anybody who saw me, and all to cheere up the younge man and make him merry. A little older yet, the child will run and play, rolling his hoop, spinning his top, enjoying the excitement of tag and hide-and-go-seek; and I dare say that the old man, a little younger than before, would be just as happy with hoop and top (if he were again introduced to them), and would have a grand, good time at tag and hidey-go if he had other old men and old women to play with, and his youngers would let him. I do not mean that he would do any of these things as well as the child; but it would please him as much to do them to the top of his aged bent, though now and then a flicker of remembered convention, which the

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child has never known and considered, would make him self-consciously abandon these simple pleasures. Even as an old cat, caught trying to catch its tail, will sit up with dignity and pretend that it was n't.

There was once a custom of including a skeleton, or perhaps a mummy, in the festivity of a banquet, to remind the diners of their mortality, and, for all I know, the after-dinner speakers of the shortness of time; though very likely they soon got used to their silent companion, and took their mortality as lightly as most people do at dinner. An "Olde, Olde, very Olde Man," as a contemporary writer called the unpicturesque human ruin I have just referred to, would, it seems to me, have answered the same purpose, and answered it better. Human nature takes neither the skeleton nor the mummy with continu-

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ous seriousness, and proves by its attitude that, if we instinctively fear death at one moment, we instinctively ridicule our fear at another. I have read it argued that man with his clothes on is nevertheless naked, — such arguments seem to amuse the philosophers, — and by the same entertaining process of reasoning we are all skeletons together, though some may worry lest others consider them too fat for romantic admiration. Or, again, to the man who believes that death snuffs him out like a candle, this skeleton at the feast might easily become an urgent reminder that he is still living, and he would most unwisely stuff himself out like a toy balloon while he still had a chance. But your olde, olde, very olde man is a reality: he is both dead and alive; his presence, to say nothing of his table manners, should tend to make each guest regard death as

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a friend rather than an enemy, and his state of mind and body prove such a warning against pride in either, that even the after-dinner speakers would take notice and modestly shorten their speeches.

Let it not be imagined that I lack respect for age. I tell you frankly, ageing and respected Reader, that so long as you can intelligently read even this essay, you are *not* seriously old; and when you cannot, you won't know the difference, and no respect of mine will be of any value to you. Your time has not come to sit propped up at table as the latest modern improvement on the skeleton at the feast; and if ever it does, you, my friend, will not be there. Where you will be, I cannot faintly imagine, and neither churchmen nor philosophers help me, for the churchmen are too objective and the philosophers too ab-

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stract; the best I can do is to take John Fiske's word for it, who knew far more about both science and metaphysics than I can hope to, when he says the materialistic theory that the life of the soul ends with the life of the body is "perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy." But when its house has become a ruin, my soul will certainly have sense enough to look for something more habitable, and may conceivably depart while there are still a few embers burning in the furnace, leaving the fire to die out when it will. Man is a conventional being, and perhaps his most astonishing convention is a funeral.

But the custom has long gone out of thus poignantly reminding diners that a time is coming when they will have no stomachs; and olde, olde, very olde men

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will get no invitations out to dine for any suggestion of mine. Fortunately there are other uses for them. They are, for example, a source of innocent pride to their families. "Grandpa was eighty-nine his last birthday, and he still has a tooth." They interest the million readers of the morning newspaper. "Friends from far and near gathered yesterday to celebrate the 101st birthday of Mr. John Doe, 17 Jones Avenue. The venerable patriarch, who can still walk unaided from his place of honor by the steam radiator to his cushioned chair in the dining-room, when asked to what he attributes his ripe old age, replied with astonishing intelligence that the winters are longer than they used to be. Mr. Doe was surrounded by 247 living children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren." These are visible uses; but this olde, olde, very olde man may have,

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invisibly, a more important function; and the helplessness of age, like that of infancy, may well have been a necessary factor in the slow conversion of our ape-like ancestor into you and me.

I have commented elsewhere on the natural astonishment of the first parents who realized, with their inefficient prehistoric minds, that *this* baby belonged to *them*, and how, in the considered opinion of able scientists, the little hitherto missing link joined father and mother into the first human family. Tending and providing for Baby made the cave a home; but I suspect it was a long time before tending and providing for Grandpa added another motive for the cultivation of those higher qualities that distinguish man from all other animals. Why, there were savages who ate him! Yet in due time the olde, olde, very olde man became such a motive,

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and to-day man is the only animal that takes care of its grandfather. When you think of the differences between men to-day and men then, between men then and the ape-men before them, and between men now as they go about their various occupations, it seems quite possible that ape-men had no souls at all, and that some men to-day have rudimentary ones, millions of years behind others in evolution. It explains much. And so, wherever there is an olde, olde, very olde man, I dare say the care his youngers take of him is doing them good; they might even reverse the parental platitude of punishment, and say, "Grandpa, this does me more good than it does you."

But this proud possession of an olde, olde, very olde man does not always work visibly toward such beneficent ends. His obstreperous infancy, mas-

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querading in mature garments, sometimes exhausts the patience of his younger; and his permanent conviction (often the only sign of intelligence left) that he knows more than they do, and perhaps more than anybody else, makes their task difficult: it is one thing, so to speak, to take care of a baby when it is growing up, and another thing to take care of a baby when it is growing down. Then, indeed, one needs the assurance of immortality, the conviction that Grandpa is, little as one might think it, still growing up, and that this simulacrum of Grandpa that still remains to be looked after, must not be taken too seriously. These olde, olde, very olde men are not all just alike: there are grandpas whom anybody might be proud to take care of, and grandpas whom anybody might be excused for wishing (as the brisk, modern phrase has it) to sidestep. And the

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explanation of this diversity, as of much else that puzzles us in a puzzling world, may be that they were not all just alike when they were babies. Inside their thin and tiny skulls some had better brains than others, brains with more of those wonderful little pyramidal neurones, which, able scientists (unless I get their message twisted) tell me, correlate, connect, assemble, and unite our individual ideas, memories, sensations, and intellectual and emotional what-nots. Men, in short, may be born free, but they are not born equal.

But why worry? If the individual soul is still young, it will keep on growing in wisdom and experience; nor will it lose touch with other souls that are akin to it, and, in the measurement of eternity, its contemporaries; and it will have a better and better house to live in, with ever more modern improvements in the

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way of pyramidal neurones. As the March Hare conclusively replied to Alice, when she asked why the three little sisters who lived in the treacle-well learned to draw by drawing everything that began with an M, "Why not?"

So if ever I become like the valetudinarian described by Macaulay, who "took great pleasure in being wheeled along his terrace, who relished his boiled chicken and his weak wine and water, and who enjoyed a hearty laugh over the Queen of Navarre's tales," I hope that somebody will considerately push my chariot, boil me an occasional chicken, and keep handy my spectacles and the Queen of Navarre's mirth-provokers. The weak wine and water I shall have to do without. But my soul, I like to think, which is the Me for work and play, love, friendship, and all the finer things of life, already will have

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closed the door of its house and gone away. And as it goes, I like to think, also, that it whistles cheerfully a little tune of its own, the burden of which is "Life is long."



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Bergengren, Ralph W.
The seven ages of man.

